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BY ERNEST HOWARD CROSBY

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Tolstoy as a Schoolmaster

Tolstoy. From a private photograph taken in 1902.

Drawn by F. Anger.

TOLSTOY AS A SCHOOLMASTER

By
ERNEST CROSBY

Author of "Tolstoy and His Message," "Plain Talk in Psalm and Parable," "Swords and Ploughshares," etc.

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CHAPTER I

THE SCHOOL AT YASNAIA POLIANA

Among the literary projects which Count Tolstoy is said to have on his hands is a book on education. It is to be hoped that he may be able to write it, as the subject is one in which he has been interested for the past forty years; and it was as a schoolmaster in his native village as long ago as 1862 that he first gave signs of many of his present ideas on government and society.

The serfs had just been freed, and, as a good landlord, Tolstoy set to work at the education of the peasant children so that they might be fitted for their newly acquired freedom. He established a school with three or four teachers beside himself. There were in all about forty pupils, including half a dozen girls.

Not satisfied with this form of activity, Tolstoy edited an educational journal, in which he gave the results of his experience for the benefit of those in other parts of Russia who were enlisted in the same enterprise. The articles in this periodical were doubtless intended to accomplish a temporary purpose and not as a permanent contribution to literature, but Tolstoy has such a faculty of throwing himself and his entire genius into everything

that he does that his editorial work attracted wide attention, and I have in my library four volumes in French, published nearly thirty years after the journal was issued, and made up in great part of articles taken from it: ("L'Ecole de Yasnaia Poliana"; "Le Progrès et l'Instruction Publique en Russie"; "La Liberté dans l'Ecole"; "Pour les Enfants." Albert Savine, Paris.)

A two-storey stone house was selected for the school. A little bell, hung over the doorway, rang at eight o'clock every morning, and half an hour later the children appeared. No one was ever reproved for tardiness, and yet there was rarely an absentee at the opening of the exercises. The children had nothing to bring with them, neither book nor copy-book nor slate; there were no lessons to prepare; neither was there any obligation upon them to remember what they had learned the day before. The boy was not tortured with the expectation of an examination or recitation of any kind. "He brings only himself, his impressionable nature, and the certainty that the school will be as happy for him to-day as it was yesterday." He had not to think of the class until it commenced. No attempt whatever was made to enforce order, for "children should learn to keep order themselves."

Here is a scene in Tolstoy's own words:

"The teacher enters the class-room. On the floor is a pile of children, one upon another, screaming and bawling. 'You are smashing me!' or 'Stop pulling my hair!'

"A voice from the bottom of the heap calls the teacher by name·

"'Peter Michailovitch, tell them to leave me alone!'

"'Good morning, Peter Michailovitch,' shout the others, keeping up the tumult.

"The teacher goes to the cupboard, takes out the books and distributes them to those who have followed him. Those who are on top of the pile ask for theirs. Gradually the pile grows smaller, and at last those at the bottom come running for their books too. If one or two boys are left fighting each other on the floor, the others, now ready on the benches, book in hand, cry out to them:

"'Come, stop now. Why do you wait so long? We can't hear anything.'

"They sit wherever they please, on the benches, on the tables, on the window-sill, on the floor, or in an old armchair which has found its way into the room, no one knows how."

The order is perfect, there is no whispering, pinching or laughing. The hours for lessons are most irregular. Sometimes a lesson which should take one hour is prolonged for three hours, if the pupils are sufficiently interested. Sometimes the children cry out, "Not yet, not yet!" when the teacher is about to close the class. The children are not obliged to come to school nor to remain there, nor are they required to pay attention while there.

"To my mind," says Tolstoy, "this disorder on the surface is useful and necessary, however strange and irksome it may seem to the master. . . . In the first place, this disorder, or rather this free order, only appears frightful to us because we are

accustomed to an entirely different system, according to which we have been educated ourselves. Secondly, in this case, as in many others, the use of force is founded only upon an inconsiderate and disrespectful interpretation of human nature. It seems as if the disorder were gaining and growing from instant to instant, as if nothing could stop it but coercion, when, if we only wait a moment, we see the disorder (like a fire) go down of itself and produce an order much better and more stable than that which we should substitute for it."

He insists that throughout the children should be treated as reasoning and reasonable beings, who will find out for themselves that order is necessary, but who resent forcible interference, independent of their own experience.

CHAPTER II

FIGHTS AT SCHOOL

Tolstoy does not believe in interfering in the fights of children. "The master throws himself between them to separate them," he says, "and the two enemies look at each other angrily. Unable to restrain themselves even in the presence of the master whom they fear, they end by grappling with each other more hotly than ever. How many times on the same day do I see Kirouschka, with set teeth, fall upon Taraska, seize him by the hair and throw him down; it looks as if he wished to disfigure him and leave him for dead. But before a moment has passed, Taraska is already laughing under Kirouschka and turns the tables on him. In five minutes they are good friends again, sitting side by side.

"Not long ago two boys began fighting in a corner after school—one of them a remarkable mathematician of nine years or so, a pupil of the second class; the other a little fellow with black eyes, close-cropped hair, intelligent but vindictive, named Kiska. Kiska seized the long hair of the mathematician and pushed his head against the wall, while the latter tried in vain to catch hold of the shorn locks of his assailant. Kiska's black eyes glistened with triumph, and the mathematician could hardly keep back his tears.

"'Well, well! What is it? What is it? What is it?' he said, but you could easily see that

it was hurting him, and that he was only trying to appear brave. This lasted for some time, and I was in doubt as to what to do.

"'They are fighting! They are fighting!' the children cried, and they crowded into the corner. The little ones laughed, but the big boys, although they did not try to separate the combatants, looked at them with a serious expression. Kiska noticed their looks and the silence. He understood that what he was doing was not right. He began to smile, and gradually let go the hair of the mathematician. The latter freed himself, smashed Kiska against the wall, and then went off quite satisfied. The little fellow began to cry and rushed after his enemy, hitting him with all his might on the coat but without hurting him. The mathematician was about to hit back, when cries of disapproval rang out.

"'Look, he is hitting a little boy!' shouted the spectators. 'Run away, Kiska!'

"The matter ended there without leaving a trace, except probably the dim idea in the minds of both lads that fighting is disagreeable. In this case the sentiment of justice was aroused by the crowd, but how often such affairs are ended, by virtue of some unknown laws, to the dissatisfaction of both parties! How arbitrary and unjust in comparison are all the remedies employed in such cases!

"'You are both to blame; on your knees!' says the teacher.

"And he is wrong, for there is only one of them to blame, who triumphs as he kneels down, gloating over his badness, while the innocent one is doubly punished.

" Or : ' You are to blame for doing this or that, and you shall be punished ! ' says the teacher ; and the punished child will only hate his enemy the more, feeling as he does a despotic power at his side whose legitimacy he does not recognize.

" Or : ' Forgive him, God wishes it so, and be better than he is,' says the teacher.

" You tell him to be ' better than he is,' but he wishes only to be stronger ; better,—he does not understand what it means.

" Or : ' You are both to blame ; ask each other's pardon and kiss each other, my children.'

" This is the worst of all, for the kiss will not be sincere, and the bad feeling, stilled for a moment, may awake again.

" Leave them alone then, unless you are the father or the mother, who, full of pity for their son, always assume the right to pull the hair of whoever beats him. Leave them alone and see how everything arranges itself, calms itself, simply and naturally."

Tolstoy has given as much space to the account of the fight between Kiska and the mathematician as Homer devotes to a combat of heroes. Simple as the story is, it possesses, even after being translated into French and from French into English, all the realism which distinguishes his great novels. Before such a boys' fight well may the teacher feel the same hesitation that Tolstoy experienced, and it is worthy of consideration whether the natural termination of such encounters is not usually more salutary than the interference of a *deus ex machina*, who, in inflicting punishment and reproof, often exhibits a spirit worse than that of either of the pugilists.

CHAPTER III

PUNISHMENT

WHILE disapproving altogether of punishment, Tolstoy admits that the habit of punishing was so ingrained in him and his associates that they indulged in it once or twice, but the result was to confirm him in the opinion that it was a mistake.

He gives one instance. A Leyden jar disappeared from the laboratory. Pencils and books began to vanish. The best boys in the school blushed and stammered when questioned about it as if they had been guilty, but it was only the idea of being suspected that affected them thus. At last the culprits were discovered; two boys from a neighbouring village, who had hidden their booty in a small box. The disclosure gave great satisfaction to the school, removing suspicion, as it did, from the other pupils.

It was decided to submit the question of the kind of punishment to the boys. Some suggested whipping, and asked to be permitted to do the whipping themselves. Others advised placing a placard bearing the word "thief" on each of the guilty pair. The latter course was adopted, and a little girl was called in to sew the obnoxious word upon their coats. The rest of the boys looked on with malicious glee, mocking at the two transgressors, and begged that they might be led through the village and carry the placard until the next holiday.

The two boys cried bitterly, and one of them cast wicked and savage glances at his exulting

comrades. As he went home, with his head bent down and eyes on the ground, and, as it seemed to Tolstoy, with the gait of a criminal, the children followed in a crowd and tormented him so cruelly and unnaturally that they appeared to be possessed by a devil.

From that time forth Tolstoy noticed that this boy became less studious, and ceased to take part in the games of the other boys. Not long after he stole again, this time some coppers from one of the masters. Once more the placard was fastened upon him, and the same brutal scenes were re-enacted. "I lectured him," says Tolstoy, "as schoolmasters are wont. A big boy who stood by began to lecture him, too, repeating phrases which he had undoubtedly heard from his father, a janitor:

"'He has stolen once, he has stolen twice,' said he, sententiously. 'He will get into the habit of stealing. What will not the love of gain push him to?'

"This annoyed me. I was irritated with the young prig. I looked at the face of the accused. As I saw him, paler, sadder, more untamed than before, I thought of felons in prison, I don't know why, and I tore the placard from his clothes and told him to go where he pleased, for I suddenly became conscious that the whole thing was wrong. I felt all at once, not in my intellect, but through my whole being, that I had no right to torture this poor child, and that I could not mould him as we wished to—I and the janitor's son. I felt that there are secrets of the soul which we cannot pierce and which life alone can change, and not reproaches and punishments.

"How stupid it all is! The child has stolen a

book ; by a long and complicated series of ideas, thoughts and false arguments, he has been led to take a book ; he does not know why he has shut it up in his box—and I fasten a placard upon him with the word ' thief ' on it, which means quite a different thing. What good will it do ? Punish him by shame, you will say. Punish him by shame ? To what end ? Do we know that shame destroys the inclination to steal ? Perhaps, on the contrary, it stimulates it. Perhaps it was not shame that was expressed on his face. Indeed, I am quite sure that it was not shame, but something else which might have slept for ever in his soul and which ought not to have been aroused.

" In the world which calls itself practical, the world of the Palmerstons and Cains,[1] the world which holds for reasonable not that which is reasonable but that which is practical—there, in that world, let the people arrogate to themselves the right of duty and punishing. But our world of children, of beings simple and frank, should be kept free from falsehood and from this criminal belief in the propriety of chastisement, from this theory that vengeance is just, as soon as we call it punishment."

It remains for other teachers to verify in their experience this deduction which Tolstoy has drawn from his. In the case which he cites he believes that the punishment inflicted had no tendency to correct the boy, but made him clearly worse than he had been, and at the same time stirred up the evil passions and latent meanness of the rest of the school.

[1] It should be remembered that Tolstoy wrote this in the early sixties.

CHAPTER IV

STORY-TELLING

In the afternoon about dusk—the early dusk of a Russian winter—the school came together again, and all the classes united, usually for the lesson in history, either sacred history or the history of Russia. The evening lessons, and especially this first one, were distinguished from those in the morning, says Count Tolstoy, by a particular note of serenity and poetry. He gives us a picture of this evening class, which I shall paraphrase and abbreviate :

Come to the school in the twilight ; there is no light in the windows ; all is peaceful. The snow on the stairs, a faint murmur, a slight movement behind the door, a boy running upstairs two steps at a time : these are the only indications that the school is in session. Enter the class-room. It is almost dark behind the frosty panes. The older boys and the best scholars are pushed forward by their comrades close to the teacher, and lifting their little heads, hold their eyes fixed upon his lips. One little girl, perched on a high table, with a preoccupied expression of face, looks as if she were swallowing each word. Somewhat farther back are seated the less diligent pupils, and behind them the smallest boys of all. These little fellows listen, attentive and even with knit brows, in the same attitude as the big boys, but notwithstanding their attention, we know that they will not be able to

recite anything, although a good deal will stick in their memories. Some are leaning on the shoulders of their neighbours, some are standing behind tables. Occasionally one of them, making his way behind another, amuses himself by drawing figures on his back with his finger.

They listen to a new story as if petrified. When it is repeated they cannot refrain from showing their knowledge by prompting the master. But an old familiar tale they insist on having recited accurately word for word, and they permit no interruption. If they notice an omission, they finish the story themselves.

It seems as if all were dead; nothing moves. Are they not asleep? You advance in the shadow, and examine the face of one of the smaller boys. He is sitting, devouring the teacher with his eyes, and his intense attention makes him frown. For the tenth time he pushes from his shoulder the arm of a boy who is leaning on him. You tickle his neck, he does not even smile, he shakes his head as if to drive away a fly. He is entirely absorbed in the mysterious story of how the veil of the temple was rent in twain and the sky darkened. It is at once painful and sweet to him.

Now the teacher has finished. All jump up and crowd round him, trying, each one louder than his neighbour, to repeat what they have remembered. The master attempts to stop them by assuring them that he knows that they have remembered it all. It is of no use. They go to the other master, or if he is not there, to a schoolfellow, or a stranger, or even to the caretaker, begging him to listen to them. It is a rare thing for one of

them to repeat it alone. They gather in groups, each one seeking his equals in intelligence, and thus they recite, encouraging, questioning and correcting each other. At last they have exhausted the subject and gradually become calm. Candles are brought in, and they take up the next lesson.

Throughout the evening there is less noise and disturbance than in the morning, and more obedience and docility. We note a special dislike at this time for mathematics and analysis and a passion for singing, reading and especially story-telling. By eight o'clock their eyes begin to grow dim, they yawn frequently, the candles burn less brightly and have to be often snuffed. The older boys still hold out, but the younger boys and the stupider ones begin to drop off asleep with their elbows on the table, to the vague accompaniment of the master's voice.

CHAPTER V

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY

One of the peculiarities of Tolstoy's village school was that if the children wanted to go home at any time they were allowed to do so. He gives a dramatic account of one of these occasions, which I shall reproduce as far as possible in his own words.

Sometimes the children got tired by the second or third class after dinner. Suddenly two or three boys rush for their caps.

"Where are you going?"

"Home."

"But how about the other lessons?"

"The boys have said, 'Let's go home,' answers one of them, slipping out of the door with his cap."

"But who said that?"

"See, they have gone."

"But how is that?" asks the master, thoroughly annoyed now, while he is preparing for the next class. "You had better stay, anyhow."

Another boy rushes into the room with face animated and an embarrassed air.

"What are you waiting for?" says he roughly to the boy who has been told to stay, and who is standing hesitatingly, twisting his cap in his hands.

"Look where the fellows are already! They have passed the blacksmith's."

And both the boys rush out, crying "Good bye" to the teacher.

And who are the boys who decided to go home? What put it into their heads? No one knows. They did not deliberate or conspire, and yet they have gone.

"The children are going home!" No sooner is this cry raised than little feet are heard on the stairs, and the youngsters, falling over each other in the snow, jumping like cats, racing one with another, set off for the village.

These scenes occur once or twice a week. They are rather mortifying to the master, but he submits to them because they give a deeper meaning to the five, six or even seven classes, voluntarily attended each day by the pupils. The desire to learn is strong enough in children to make them undergo many vexations in order to satisfy it.

The subject of truancy does not seem to have come up in Count Tolstoy's school. Perhaps if attendance at school were presented to children not as a duty, but as a privilege, they might prize it more highly, and if it were known that they could go home when they liked, the very sense of freedom would make them want to stay. It would bring into play not the authority, but the attraction of the teacher.

Out of school hours the greatest friendliness existed between Count Tolstoy and his pupils. The regular session lasted until half-past eight in the evening, the last hours being devoted to singing, reading and experiments in physics, magnetism, etc., these experiments giving the greatest satisfaction to the boys. After school

Tolstoy would often take a walk with them in the snow, sometimes going to the edge of the woods where the danger of wolves forbade further wandering. He would tell them stories and lead them into the discussion of the deepest questions, in which these peasant boys showed as much intelligence as the most learned and educated men.

"What is the use of drawing?" asked a bright lad on one of these walks. "What is the use of art?"

Tolstoy did not know what to answer.

"What is the use of a stick? What is the use of a plane tree?" answered Semka, one of the boys, striking a plane tree with his stick.

"Yes, what is the use of a plane tree in summer before it is cut down?"

And they come naturally to consider the profound questions of the relations of beauty to usefulness, concluding that the beauty of the tree is sufficient excuse for it. One of the boys regrets that the tree has to be cut down, because it is a living thing. "The sap is just like blood," he says.

For a long time they walk on, talking thus seriously, one of the boys holding the Count's hand affectionately.

Tolstoy is indignant at the suggestion that it is a mistake to allow the minds of peasants to develop "beyond their station." "Who will do the hard work," some people ask, "when everybody is either an artist or a philosopher?" The mind of the peasant is naturally like the mind of the landed proprietor, and one is equally entitled with the other to have its craving for knowledge and mental exercise gratified.

CHAPTER VI

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Tuition at the school of Yasnaia Poliana was of course free. There were about forty pupils in all, but usually not more than thirty were present at a time, of whom four or five were girls. The ages of the boys varied from seven to thirteen years, with an occasional adult who wished to make up for the lack of opportunity to study during his boyhood. There were four teachers in all, and six or seven lessons a day. Tolstoy used the school as a laboratory for experiments. He has the habit of mind of questioning all traditions and customs in all realms of thought and activity, and of making them answer for themselves, and he carried it with him into the field of education.

It is a disturbing habit, and perhaps it is just as well that all men do not indulge in it; but it is stimulating to find here and there a man who insists on thinking for himself, and who refuses to accept without proof the most time-honoured theories. Count Tolstoy soon came to the conclusion, as we have seen, that it is fatal to consider the school as a disciplined company of soldiers, all obeying the same orders in the same way. A certain degree of freedom, of disorder even, he found necessary for the purpose of revealing the individuality of each pupil. He compared his own method of teaching with that of the village sacristan, and as a result of the comparison for-

mulated three rules, namely, that (1) The teacher always has a tendency to select that method of teaching which is easiest for him; (2) that the easier it is for him, the less satisfactory it is for his pupils; and (3) that method only is good which gives satisfaction to the pupils. And to give satisfaction to the pupils it is necessary to take account of the differences between them and of their natural aptitudes.

Tolstoy found the old-fashioned school curriculum based upon the study of grammar, and this study appeared to him particularly senseless. The object of learning grammatical rules is to speak the language correctly, but it is obviously possible to speak correctly without knowing the rules, and hence the value of learning them consists chiefly in the mental exercise, which can be obtained as easily in some other more useful way. He found practice in composition much the best way of studying language. In the first and second classes the choice of subjects was left to the pupils, who usually preferred stories from the Old Testament, which they wrote out two months after they had heard them from the master. In the second class they tried compositions on given subjects, such as "wheat," "houses," "wood," but to their surprise these subjects drove the boys to tears, and even when the master helped them, and called their attention to the growing of the grain of wheat, its transformations and uses, they still worked reluctantly, and made all sorts of mistakes in spelling, grammar and meaning. Then Tolstoy changed his method and narrated some event to them, and they were at once delighted,

and they found it much easier to recite an incident which they remembered than to describe a pig or a pot or a table. To the master these simple subjects seemed the easiest, but the child, as usual, looked at things from the opposite point of view, and was interested only in that which is complex and living.

Text-books, says Tolstoy, usually begin with general ideas, those of grammar with adjectives, those of history with divisions into periods, those of geometry with definition of space and of the mathematical point; but these general ideas are the hardest to comprehend, and the child must begin with something tangible, related to his own common experiences. To describe a table requires a high degree of philosophical attainment, and the child who cries because he has to write about a chair, will express well a feeling of love or hate—either the meeting of Joseph with his brethren or a quarrel of his own with his comrades.

The subjects which the children chose were either some particular event, their relations with some particular person, or tales that they had heard. They preferred writing compositions to any other exercise. Out of school, as soon as they chanced upon paper and pencil, they began to write stories. And they soon became critics as well, vexed when the story of a fellow-pupil was too long, or disconnected, or when there were too many repetitions. They had definite tastes of their own. Sometimes a boy would refuse to read his essay, declaring that that of another boy was better than his, and soon, when the composi-

tions were read anonymously, the boys would easily guess who the author was.

Tolstoy gives two specimens of composition by Fedka, a boy of ten, to show how much more easily he described a trip to Toula than a concrete object. Here is his essay on "Wheat."

"The grain germinates in the ground. First it is green, but when it has grown a little it produces ears and the women reap it. There is also a kind of wheat like grass which the cattle eat."

And this was all he could find to write on the subject. He saw that the composition was a poor one, and was much distressed about it, but he could not improve it. Here is his essay on "Toula."

"When I was still a little fellow, about five years old, I used to hear people speak of going to Toula, but I did not know what it was. And so I asked father, 'Father, to what Toula do you go? Is it pretty?' Father said, 'Yes.' And I said, 'Take me with you, father, so that I may see Toula.' Father said, 'All right. Come on Sunday and I'll take you.' I was delighted, and began to run and jump on the bench. The days passed and Sunday arrived. I got up early, and father was already harnessing the horses in the farmyard, and I dressed myself as quickly as I could. When I came out, the horses were already harnessed. I got into the sleigh, and we left.

"We go on and on until we have gone fourteen versts. I see a big church, and I cry out, 'Father, see what a big church.' Father answered, 'There is another smaller church, which is smaller but prettier.' I begin to beg him, 'Father, let's go there to church.' Father takes me there. As we

arrive, they begin ringing the bells. I am afraid, and ask father what it is, if it is a drum and trumpet. Father says, 'No, it is the mass that is beginning.' Then we go into the church to say our prayers. When that is done, we go to the market, and I walk and walk and trip up, and look everywhere. We reach the market, and I see they are selling kalatchi (rolls of bread), and I want to take some without paying. And father says to me, 'Don't take any, or they will take your hat.' I ask why they would take it, and father says, 'Take nothing without paying.' I say, 'Give me ten kopeks and I'll buy a kalatch.' Father gives me some. I buy three kalatchi. I eat them and say, 'Father, what good kalatchi.' When we have bought all that we have to, we return to our horses, give them a drink and some hay. When they have finished eating, we harness them and go back home. I go into the house and undress, and I begin to tell everybody that I had been at Toula, and how father and I had gone to church to pray to God. Then I go to sleep, and in my dream I see father leave for Toula again. I wake up quickly and see that all are sleeping, and then I go to sleep again too."

Tolstoy's estimate of the artistic capabilities of the peasant children in the way of authorship may seem a little exaggerated, but he publishes the results and invites the assent of the public to his belief. He printed some of the stories which they composed in his educational journal, and also one composed by a master, and he insists that the last was the worst of them all. He had some difficulty in inducing the boys to write, but when

finally he sat down among them and they all set to work to compose a story based on some simple theme which he would outline in a few words, before long they would stop writing and crowd round him looking over his shoulder, and then he would let them take the story out of his hands, accepting every suggestion from them and acting merely as amanuensis with a certain right of selection.

The first page of this story was Tolstoy's own, the rest was almost wholly the boys', and he declares that "every unprejudiced man, however little he may care for art or the people, after having read the first page written by me and the following pages written by the pupils themselves, will distinguish it readily from the rest like a fly in a glass of milk, so poor, so artificial and in such a bad style is it written. I should say that originally it was even worse, and I corrected it a great deal upon hints from the scholars." It was on this occasion that he discovered the ability of Fedka, and he was especially struck by his sense of proportion, "the principal condition of all art." They worked together for four hours, from seven to eleven in the evening, and the other boys dropped out, except Fedka and one of his companions, Semka by name.

"Will it really be printed?" asked Fedka.

"Yes."

"Then you must say it is by Makaroff, Morosoff and Tolstoy." Tolstoy does not hesitate to place Fedka above Goethe, and as for himself, "far from being able to guide or help Semka, a child of eleven, and Fedka, I should consider myself happy (and

only during a happy moment of excitement) to understand and follow them ! "

Unfortunately this particular story, so far as I know, has not been translated into English, French or German, and the extracts which Count Tolstoy gives in his *Pour Les Enfants* imply a knowledge of the story, and are consequently not illuminative. He gives more of a story of Fedka's, however, describing the unexpected return of a soldier to his family, in the days when enlistment meant usually banishment from home for life. This theme was also suggested by Tolstoy.

The first chapter is inferior, he declares, because he, Tolstoy, interfered with its authorship. The end of the story, which gives an account of the actual return of the father to his family, Tolstoy thinks superior to anything in Russian literature. It depicts the delight of the boy at seeing his father. He sits next to him at table so that he may touch him. The father goes out, and the boy wishes to follow him, but his mother forbids it, and when he persists she gives him a slap. He begins to cry, and climbs up on top of the brick oven, the Russian's favourite resting place. The father comes in again, and asks—

" ' Why are you crying ? '

" I complain of my mother. He goes up to her and pretends to slap her, saying—

" ' Never slap Fedoushka again ! Never slap Fedoushka again ! '

" And mother makes belief to cry."

This is certainly a pretty scene, but I must leave it to others better qualified to determine its rank

in Russian literature, and in comparison with the works of Goethe and Tolstoy.

While Fedka and Semka were the best artists of the school, Tolstoy discovered the same talents, only in lesser degree, in the other boys. "A healthy child," he says, "when he comes into the world, realizes completely the absolute harmony with the true, the beautiful, and the good which we carry in us; he is still in touch with inanimate things, with plant and animal life, with that nature which personifies in our eyes that true, beautiful and good which we seek and long for. . . . But every hour of life, every minute of time, disturbs more and more those relations which, when he was born, were in a perfectly harmonious equilibrium, and every step, every hour, violates this harmony."

"Education perverts a child, it cannot correct him. The more he is perverted, the less must we educate him, and the more does he need freedom. To teach, to bring up a child, why, it is a chimera, an absurdity, for this simple reason, that the child is much nearer than I am, or any grown man, to the true, beautiful and good to which I undertake to raise him. The consciousness of this ideal lives in him more intensely than in me, and all that he requires of me is the material with which to perfect himself harmoniously in all directions."

CHAPTER VII

RECITATIONS AND EXAMINATIONS

Bible history and Russian history were both taught in the Yasnaia school. The teacher reads or tells his story from memory and then asks questions, to which the children answer all together. If this produces too much disorder, he puts the question to a single pupil, and if he cannot answer, the rest help him out. This system was the gradual growth of experience, and it worked very well whether there were thirty children present or only five. The master does not allow the noise to become overwhelming, but guides, so far as it may be necessary, the torrent of happy animation and excited rivalry.

A new master was shocked by the uproar, and almost suffocated by the crowd of children climbing over his back and on his lap, and he put a stop to it, but by so doing he completely spoiled the class. To enable them to understand, says Tolstoy, children need to come close to those who are talking, and to seize the slightest change of face and of gesture. The new master made them sit on benches and answer each in turn. The boy who was questioned stammered, ashamed and confused, and the teacher, with a kindly expression and a smile, encouraged him by saying—

"Well, then . . . and after that? . . . good, very good," as is the wont of schoolmaster .

But Tolstoy soon became convinced that nothing was worse for a child than to have to answer alone in this way, and nothing more harmful than the relations of superior and subordinate which it produced between master and pupil. "Nothing is more revolting to me," he says, "than this spectacle of a man who torments a child without having the slightest right to do it. The teacher knows well enough that the pupil is suffering from having to stand blushing and perspiring before him, and he finds it disagreeable himself, but he has a rule—a pupil must learn to speak alone."

But why must he learn to recite alone? "Nobody knows," unless indeed it is to be able to show off before visitors. And visitors Tolstoy regards as thorough-going nuisances. They had only one effect upon him, and that was to satisfy him that set exercises and answers and examinations were relics of the superstitions of the Middle Ages. Either they went away convinced that the scholars knew what they did not know, and the teacher had succeeded in fooling them, or else they thought that they did not know what they knew perfectly well. It would be as sensible, he claims, to examine a man of forty in his knowledge of geography as to examine a man of ten. You have to live for months with a person to find out what he knows. And where examinations are made a feature of education they become an end in themselves, and the student no longer really learns philosophy or history, but he learns the altogether distinct art of answering examination questions, a totally useless branch of study.

Tolstoy made the experiment in history of questioning the class separately. Most of them soon tired of this. The boldest alone went on answering, and the timid ones held their peace, burst into tears, and were marked zero. The new teacher was disgusted with the results, and noted in his class-book that this, that, and the other boy were stupid and worse. "I cannot get a word out of Savine," he entered.

Savine was a rosy-cheeked boy with soft eyes and long lashes, the son of a farm-hand. He wore a blouse and trousers and his father's boots. His pretty and attractive face struck Tolstoy at once, especially as he won the first place in the arithmetic class, both by his ability to calculate and by his merry enthusiasm. He also read and wrote fairly well. But as soon as he was questioned, "he drops his head on one side, tears come to his eyes, and he evidently longs to sink through the floor." It is a real martyrdom for him. "Is it the fear which his former teacher inspired in him (he had studied with a priest)? Is it self-distrust, pride, his false position among children whom he considers inferior to himself, the dislike of seeing himself in this one matter behind all the rest, and of appearing at a disadvantage to his teacher? Has this little soul been hurt by some unlucky word of the master? Is it for all these reasons together? God knows, but this shyness, even if of itself it is not a good trait, is certainly closely bound up with all that is best in his boyish soul. To obliterate it with the aid of a ruler—material or moral—you may do it, but at the risk of obliterating at the same time other precious

qualities without which you cannot lead him far on the right road."

Tolstoy persuaded the new teacher to let the children desert the benches and climb where they pleased, and the class began at once to improve. And he soon saw entered in the journal some flattering remarks regarding the same Savine.

Maeterlinck has spoken recently of the "spirit of the bee-hive." Forty years ago Tolstoy wrote very much the same way of the "spirit of the school." "There is," he tells us, "in a school, something undefined, which is almost entirely independent of the master's control, something absolutely unknown to the science of pedagogy, and which constitutes notwithstanding the very foundation of success in teaching—it is the spirit of the school. The master has indeed a negative influence upon it, for unless he abstains from certain things, he may destroy it. This spirit increases in proportion as the master allows the pupils to think for themselves, and with the number of pupils, and it decreases in proportion as the lessons and hours are lengthened. It communicates itself from child to child and to the teacher himself, and shows itself in the sound of the voice, in looks, in gestures, in rivalries—something very palpable, necessary and precious, and which consequently every master ought to cherish. It is a spirit of ardour which is as necessary to intellectual nourishment as the saliva is to digestion. It cannot be artificially produced, but it springs into life of itself. It is the teacher's duty to find some useful object for this spirit to spend itself upon, and not to try to quench it.

You ask one boy a question, but another wishes to answer it. He bends towards you and looks at you with all his might. He can hardly keep back the words. Ask him, and he will answer with passion, and what he says will be fixed for ever on his memory. But if you keep him in that state of tension for half an hour without letting him overflow, he will let it out in pinching his neighbour."

Tolstoy tested his classes in the following way. He would go out and leave the school to itself, after it had been going on for a time in the usual disorder. When he returned he would listen at the door and find the children still engaged at their studies, reciting to each other and correcting each other, more quietly than when he was there; while in an old-fashioned school, if the teacher leaves, and orders the pupils to continue their studies alone, they will begin sky-larking as soon as he is out of hearing. The reaction is certain. A new pupil at the Yasnaia school was pretty sure to remain silent for a month or more, but gradually he began to recite with the rest and to take his natural place, absorbing what he heard.

CHAPTER VIII

HISTORY

For the teaching of history Tolstoy regards the Bible as an incomparable book, and especially the Old Testament. It interested the children more than any other. "It seems to me," says Tolstoy somewhat profoundly, "that the book of the childhood of the human race will always be the best book for the childhood of every man." He found it impossible to find a substitute for it, and all abridgements, and collections of Bible stories, were less valuable than the original. To his mind it is perfect art. It may be an improper book for "depraved young women," Tolstoy says, but he adds that he never altered a word in it when he read it to the peasants' children, and they never listened to it except with respect and interest. "How comprehensible and clear it all is, especially for a child, and serious and severe withal! I cannot see how teaching would be possible without this book."

The Bible seemed to lift the veil of a new and magical world which the pupils wished to enter, and it is the real function of the teacher to introduce his pupils into a new world of art and science. He must arouse their curiosity and their desire to follow him. And the Bible first awakened this curiosity, as nothing else could. The children

never had too much of it, and after hearing it from Tolstoy they were ready to follow him into Russian history and other fields, which before they had refused to enter.

No other book presents in such a condensed poetical form all the aspects of human thought. The primitive relations of men among themselves, of family, society, religion, show themselves in its pages for the first time. It teaches wisdom under childlike forms and charms the mind of the child. "Materialism will have a right to claim the victory when it shall have written the Bible of materialism and children have been brought up on this Bible." And Tolstoy concludes that without the Bible in our society, as without Homer in the society of Greece, the development of the child and of the man would be impossible.

The step from Bible history to other histories was not an easy one. The children showed no interest in Egypt or the Phœnicians. Before learning Bible history the children had absolutely refused to listen to Russian history. After a course of Bible history they submitted more gracefully, but still they showed very little interest in the national annals. Tolstoy admits that the history of Russia is not an inspiring one. With the exception of the turning back of the French by "Generals" January and February in 1812, there is no event which is calculated to arouse enthusiasm, and those two generals lack the human qualities of flesh and blood.

It is rather amusing to find Tolstoy, the sworn foe of patriotism, forty years ago recommending the patriotic method to teachers as the only way

to teach history. The first time he told the story of the retreat from Moscow remained a memorable occasion in his recollection. "I shall never forget it," he said. He had formed the idea of teaching history going backward from the present time. Another teacher had begun according to rule at the beginning, and the intention was eventually to meet in the middle. He went into the other class one day and found the children very weary of the subject which engaged them, and they begged him to tell them about something else. He sat down and began to explain the rise of Napoleon after the French Revolution. For several minutes there was a good deal of disorder, some of them climbing on to the table, some crept under it, and others under the benches, but finally all was quiet. He told them how Napoleon determined to subdue Russia.

"What!" cried a boy. "He will conquer us too?"

"Don't be afraid," answered another, "Alexander will get even with him."

They were much scandalized at the proposition of marrying a sister of the Tsar to Napoleon, and that the Tsar should treat him as an equal.

"Let him wait a minute," cried Petka, with a threatening gesture.

"Go on, go on!" cried the rest.

When Alexander refused to submit and declared war, all the pupils showed their approval, but when Napoleon, "with twelve nations," marched upon Russia, they were all much disturbed. A German friend of Count Tolstoy was in the schoolroom with him.

"Ah, you too are against us," cried Petka to him.

"Keep quiet!" cried the others.

The retreat of the Russians pained them grievously, and they heaped reproaches upon the generals.

"Your Koutouzov is a miserable specimen!"

"Wait a minute," said another.

"But why did he retreat?" asked a third.

It was hard work for Tolstoy to tell them that the Russians lost the battle of Borodino. It was a terrible blow to the boys.

"Anyhow, if we didn't win, they didn't either," they said.

When Napoleon reached Moscow, expecting the keys of the city and the homage of the people, there was a long cry of revolt. They approved of the burning of Moscow, of course. Then came the triumph—the retreat. Tolstoy told them how the French left Moscow, and how Koutouzov pursued them and attacked them.

"He opened his eyes for him!" cried Petka, quite red in the face, clenching his little fingers. A thrill of enthusiasm passed over the whole class, and a little boy was nearly crushed unnoticed.

When the French began to freeze to death, there were some expressions of pity. Then, as the Germans begin to side with Russia, the pupils again turn upon Tolstoy's German friend.

"Ah, that's the way you behave, is it? At first against us, and then when you see we are winning, on our side?" And the whole roomful saluted him with groans.

The German visitor accused Tolstoy of telling

a one-sided story, and the latter was obliged to admit it. If he had explained Alexander's deceitful policy towards Prussia and his cruelty to Poland, the boys would not have listened for a moment. Hence he was obliged to compose a piece of fiction and call it history. And that is the real drawback in all attempts to teach a national history in schools. The authors of the text-books and the teachers as well are forced invariably to tell a string of lies—a practice which cannot be edifying.

American history is indeed more inspiring than that of Russia. The immigration of the Pilgrim Fathers for religious freedom, the refusal to pay the unjust tax on tea, the abolition of slavery, all these great episodes give opportunities for high moral lessons, but no one uses them in that way. All the defects of the national heroes are concealed, the characters of our enemies are depicted in dark colours, and the stamp of falsehood is impressed upon the whole story. It is possible to rise to a plane of enthusiasm for humanity from which mere patriotism appears immoral. Possibly the average child cannot attain to this level, although I believe the effort of inviting him to it would be worth making, but surely he has enough patriotism by nature without our stimulating it, and especially by prevarication and unjust reflections upon other people's.

If he is to learn the history of his country, let it be a true history, and let pains be taken to dissuade him from hating and despising other nations. Let him learn that they too have their patriotisms, quite as reasonable and well-founded as his own.

And if he refuses to become interested in the truth, let him go without. And, in fact, how much history have any of us retained from our school days? I can only answer for myself. I could easily learn in a week from an Encyclopaedia all that I now remember of such instruction. And how much does the most learned scholar know of human history? A mere infinitesimal particle of the whole. And is the knowledge of a mass of undigested facts and of unrelated dates a real element of education? I doubt it.

Tolstoy came to the conclusion that the pupil's interest in history was entirely dramatic—that is, artistic. They enjoy the story of Romulus and Remus, not because they founded the greatest empire of the world, but because it is interesting and marvellous. They will not listen to an account of the migrations of peoples because there is no art in it. "Children like history only when it is vivified by art." They have no interest in history as such, and the phrase 'a child's history' is an absurdity."

Tolstoy's preference for the Bible as a book of the world's childhood suggests that good use of Greek, Roman, German and other mythologies might be made in place of more authentic histories, and as a matter of culture it is probably as well worth while to know the details of the siege of Troy as of the campaigns of Alexander the Great or of Charlemagne. The child has a natural taste for this wonder-world, and it can do no harm to gratify it. Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* made a much deeper impression upon me than any of the histories which I studied.

CHAPTER IX

OTHER CLASSES

Tolstoy had as much difficulty in teaching geography as in history. The children showed no interest at all in the fact that the earth revolves on its axis and passes round the sun. When he began to teach in which continents the various countries are, they saw no use for such information. Just as in history he tried to begin with their own time, he now made the experiment of teaching geography beginning at their own village. They took some interest in the next village, but they knew it already without study. The place beyond altogether failed to arouse their curiosity. They would listen to stories about different countries, provided always that there was no geography in them, but that was all. And when they found that the stories were intended to hoodwink them into learning geography, they resented the fraud and took a strong dislike to the class.

Tolstoy concludes that the study of geography in schools is a mistake. He quotes with approval the saying of a character in a Russian comedy:

"What's the good of learning all the countries? The coachman will take you wherever you have to go."

As a teacher he felt in himself a whole world of information regarding nature, art and poetry which he had no time to communicate to the children. There are thousands of questions about the life around us to answer before we begin to tell about the tropics and the polar regions. Children have no natural taste for geography, and the first thing to do, if it is to be studied, is to awaken that taste. Tolstoy suggests the reading of travels as a means to this end. I would be tempted to add, as even a more efficient awakener, the collecting of postage-stamps. The ordinary boy learns much more in this way than from the best of teachers.

In his book, *What is Art?* Tolstoy has fully explained his belief that the poetry, music and painting of the day have grown up in a stifling atmosphere, and that they are degenerate products. He had already formed these opinions in the days of the Yasnaia school. The children were bored by the best poetry, but they enjoyed the rude popular songs of the peasantry, and Tolstoy thinks that these latter exhibit the truer art. Hence it is natural that he should not have been altogether satisfied with the instruction which he gave to the boys in music and drawing, for from his own point of view, he should have been the pupil and they the teachers. He declares that the boys sang better when left to themselves, before receiving lessons, than they did afterwards; but it must be remembered that the Russians are a musical people, and possess a treasure of national song.

In drawing he tried to give them all the freedom

possible, and he points out that if they are made to copy and imitate at school they will go on merely copying and imitating all their lives. And in all things he would leave their own taste unaffected by the taste of the teacher, which he regards as necessarily vitiated. The child has the same right to its preferences which the master has, and his taste is less likely to be warped and distorted.

It must not be supposed that Tolstoy reached his views on education without studying fully the methods in vogue in Europe. He visited the schools of Germany, France and Switzerland, and questioned teachers and pupils with the object of learning all that could be learned from them. He made a special study of this kind at Marseilles (this was in the early sixties, I think), and was soon satisfied that the schools of that city were of very little use. Yet he found the inhabitants of Marseilles particularly intelligent, clever and civilized. What was the explanation? It was this. They had obtained their education outside of the schools, in the streets, the cafés, theatres, workshops and museums, and by reading such books as the novels of Dumas. This is the natural school, he says, which has undermined the artificial school, and has left hardly anything of it except its despotic form.

He infers that the more a people advances, the more does true education desert the school for the region of real life outside. And the effort of a school which wishes to adapt itself to this progress should be to answer the questions suggested by the home life of the pupil, for it is in his home and

among his neighbours that he is brought face to face with life. The prevailing education of the day Tolstoy condemns as moral despotism, the determination of one individual to make another individual exactly like himself, and this he declares to be an unjustifiable invasion of the rights of the individual. We have no ethical right to do it.

He draws an amusing contrast between a child while suffering from this kind of education at school, "anxious, repressed, with an expression of weariness, fear and listlessness, repeating mechanically strange words in a strange language, a creature whose soul has retired like a snail into its shell," and the same child in the street or at home, "enjoying life, wishing to learn, a smile on his face, seeking to develop in every way, and expressing his ideas clearly when he speaks."

Fifteen years after his experiments in school-teaching Tolstoy sums up his deductions in an essay on "Public Instruction." The sole basis of education, he asserts, is freedom—the freedom of the people to organize their own schools, and of the pupil to make up his own mind as to what he will learn and how he will learn it. And experience alone can point out the best method by indicating the most natural *rapport* between teacher and scholars. In each concrete case the actual degree of liberty will depend upon the master's talents and sympathy, but he insists upon the general principle that the less the restraint the better the school.

CHAPTER X

TOLSTOY'S LATER VIEWS

It is easy to see that in 1862 Tolstoy held, in germ at least, most of the views which have since made him distinguished as a radical thinker. Absolute freedom is his ideal, and he would apply it to children almost as fully as to men. In a private letter published recently, he gives some hints of his present ideas on education. He would have the teachers fix the hours of school, but leave the pupils at liberty to come or not as they please. Where school is made attractive this system would have little effect upon attendance. "That the pupils should come to learn of their own accord, when they desire it, is a *conditio sine quâ non* of all fruitful teaching, just as in feeding it is a *conditio sine quâ non* that the eater should be hungry." For truancy, I presume he would hold the teacher responsible rather than the scholar, for the teacher should have made the school more delightful.

Freedom is necessary for many reasons. The brighter pupils must be free to push ahead of the duller ones. Only in freedom can you find out what subjects the child is ready to assimilate, and what his special aptitudes may be. If freedom is denied the pupil at school, how can he be taught that it is desirable in after-life? If he is accus-

tomed to coercion during his education, he will regard it as a great and necessary feature of life. The thing to do is to teach the children what they desire to learn.

"The very little ones, if they are normally brought up, will themselves ask for lessons and insist on regularity . . . yesterday there was a lesson after dinner, and to-day they desire one after dinner." He thinks that half of the sixteen waking hours should be devoted to "education"—that is, to enlightenment, with intervals of rest and recreation. Under the head of enlightenment he includes working for one's self and family and for others, cleaning, putting in order, cooking, preparing fuel, and so forth. "The other half of the time I would give to instruction. I would let the pupil choose out of seven subjects the one to which he is attracted."

"I would like to add," he says, "that, for the purpose of educating one's children, I would not advise any one to undertake anything new, such as the removal to another place, or some theoretical pre-arranged plan as to the organization of the school; I would not recommend the invitation of teachers, of assistants, nor of pupils, but would make use of circumstances as they exist, gradually developing the future, or rather allowing it to develop.

"With regard to drawing and music—the teaching of the piano is a glaring example of wrongly organized instruction. As with drawing, so also with music—children should be taught to make use of the means which are always at hand (in drawing to use chalk, charcoal, pencil; in

music to be able to communicate what they see and hear through the medium of their own voice). This to begin with. If later on—which would be very regrettable—exceptional pupils should manifest special talent, then they could learn to paint with oil colours, or to play on expensive instruments.

"For the teaching of this elementary knowledge, I know there now exist good, new handbooks.

"With regard to the teaching of languages, the more languages are taught the better. I think French and German should be taught by all means, English and Esperanto if possible. And one should teach by inviting the pupil to read in the language he is learning a book with which he is acquainted in his native language, endeavouring to grasp the general sense and incidentally observing the most important words, their roots and grammatical forms."

This letter was not intended for publication, and in it Tolstoy explicitly states that he is writing offhand, and must give deeper thought to the matter. It will seem to most of us that the day's task is rather a heavy one, unless the intervals of recreation are made very elastic; but be it remembered that the pupil is to go or come as he pleases, and we see that a sovereign remedy for overwork is then left in his own hands.

Tolstoy's predilection for foreign languages is explained by the isolation of Russia in the matter of speech, so few foreigners as yet taking the trouble to learn Russian. It is a fact that a small child can pick up several languages as easily as

his native tongue, and that it can be done without effort or study. Whether later on, and in the absence of a special taste for languages, it is worth while to teach them to children, I should have my doubts. But here again Tolstoy supplies the corrective, for he would teach only those who wish to learn.

In another letter, written to a near relation in 1902, and published in *Essays and Letters* (Grant Richards, London; Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York, 1903, p. 338), Tolstoy gives some further indications of his present ideas upon education. "Children should be taught as little as possible," he declares in so many words, for it is much worse that they should get "educational indigestion and come to detest education." He would take especial care to free the children of the well-to-do from the parasitic tendencies of their position. They should learn to do things for themselves, and not to have everything done for them. The first condition of a good education, he says, is that a child should know that all he uses does not fall from heaven ready-made, but is produced by other people's labour. He should be ashamed to have his boots cleaned by servants, "who do it not out of love for him, but for some other reason quite unintelligible to him." "If he is not ashamed, and if he continues to use them, that is the very worst commencement of an education, and leaves the deepest traces for his whole life."

"Let them do all they can for themselves," he adds; "carry out their own slops, fill their own jugs, wash up, arrange their rooms, clean their

boots and clothes, lay the table, etc. Believe me, that unimportant as these things may seem, they are a hundred times more important for your children's happiness than a knowledge of French or of history, etc." Wherever it is possible, he advocates work in a kitchen-garden; and the teaching of all these things in the household involves the doing of them by the parents, for children only do willingly what they see their parents do. As the children of the rich are actually brought up, there is only one explanation of society possible for them, and that is that it is divided into two classes—masters and slaves. When their parents talk of the brotherhood of man and of the Christian obligation of love to neighbour, they are quick to see the lie at the basis of it all, and they lose faith in their parents and teachers and in morality itself.

In a short article printed as a leaflet by the Free Age Press, London (Free Age Press Leaflets, No. 4), Tolstoy lays down the rules which in his opinion should govern religious education. He believes that the child has by nature an instinctive knowledge of his relations to the mystery of life, and that the ordinary instruction in religious matters perverts and demoralizes him. "The child has a vague idea of that source of all, that cause of his existence, that force in whose power he finds himself, and he possesses an elevated idea of that source—indefinite and inexpressible in words, but of which his whole being is conscious —natural to all rational men. And suddenly, instead of this, he is told that this source is naught else than some sort of personal, self-willed and

dreadful evil being—the Jewish God." [1] In place of teaching him that the road to happiness is by "loving communion among men," he is made to believe that it depends on "the whims of a capricious God," and the liberation of himself from eternal punishment, earned by some one else, but which this Being has laid upon us all. A blind belief in creeds is substituted for love to neighbour.

"If I now had to transmit to a child the substance of the religious teaching I consider true," says he, "I should say to him that we have come into this world and live in it, not according to our own will, but according to the will of that which we call God, and that it will therefore be well with us only when we fulfil this will. This will is that we should all be happy; and for all to be happy there is but one means: each must act towards others as he would wish that they should act towards him.

"As to the questions about how the world came into existence, and what awaits us after death, I would answer the first by the acknowledgment of my ignorance and of the anomaly of such a question (in all the Buddhist world no such question exists); and the second I would answer by the conjecture that the will of Him who called us into this life for our welfare leads us somewhere through death—probably for the same purpose."

[1] These later opinions of Tolstoy do not necessarily conflict with his earlier conviction that the Old Testament is the best book for children, but they would suggest caution in the method of making use of it.

CHAPTER XI

AN AMERICAN EXPERIMENT

A SMALL school conducted upon very much the same lines as that of Yasnaia Poliana is in active operation in a suburb of Brooklyn, New York, and I have visited it and inspected it for the purposes of this chapter. It was founded two or three years ago by Mrs. F——, a trained Kindergartner, in complete ignorance of Tolstoy's earlier experiment, but she soon heard of it, and the account of it rejoiced her soul and gave her new courage.

After eight years in Kindergarten work, she had begun to feel that the Kindergarten system, in striving to get away from the fossilizing influence of the older systems, was becoming fossilized itself. She had studied the child carefully, and come to the conclusion that it has good instincts of its own, and that the discipline of schools dulls these instincts without providing anything in their place. It gradually dawned upon her that the best thing to do was to let the child have its own way, simply to help it to develop along its own lines, and to confine instruction to the answering of the cravings of the child.

As she let these ideas prevail in her management of her Kindergarten, she noticed that the

children gained in self-reliance and initiative, and she was pleased to learn that those who left her to take their places in the regular schools did better than other children, so much so that it attracted attention—and this, too, although she had "taught" them practically nothing, whilst the other children had been crammed in the usual way. She determined finally to abandon the Kindergarten and establish an absolutely free school of her own, which was not to be a school at all, but a place for children to grow and gain experience of life.

We all know, as a matter of fact, that children have good impulses which drop off as they grow older. Every child likes to get out of bed at sun-rise. When does the lie-abed habit begin, and where does it come from? Children love to be useful and enjoy helping at any kind of service, from sweeping the floor to harnessing a horse. How does it happen that during their education they learn to prefer to have others work for them? Small boys and girls are absolutely democratic, and you cannot explain caste-distinctions to them. Where is it that they learn them?

Mrs. F. wished to preserve what was good in these childish proclivities and give them a fair chance to develop, and she concluded that the interference of big folks had a good deal to do with the spoiling of them. So she founded the "Playhouse," as the school is called, where from eight o'clock in the morning to four in the afternoon, and seven days in the week, the children come and do as they please, while Mr. and Mrs. F. and those of the neighbours who happen

to drop in give such advice as is asked and exercise such supervision as is absolutely necessary.

Such was the school that I had heard of. For a time it was stationed at New Rochelle, and a friend of mine who knew of it there, informed me it was the noisiest place in the world. The transfer to Brooklyn had worked no change in this respect, and it was hardly necessary for me to ask which house it was, for the sounds of romping were evident enough in the street. As I turned in at the gate three or four boys rushed down the steps with spades and brooms to clear away the snow. They answered my questions, and saluted me, some of them politely, and some of them less so, and I opened the door and found myself in the Playhouse, and a playhouse it most certainly was.

It was a large cheerful room, occupying most of the first storey, well stocked with small wooden chairs, fortunately of stout construction, which stood here, there, or anywhere, and not a few lay on the floor with their legs in the air. In some of these chairs boys and girls were sitting, varying from five to thirteen years of age, writing, drawing, talking, shouting. Mrs. F. and two friends were sitting in the midst of this Bedlam, and they came forward smiling and apparently well used to the environment and contented with it. I found Mr. F. in an alcove working at a carpenter's bench, one or two children watching him and playing at doing a little work on their own account. Mr. F. is a professional man, but he goes in to New York to practise his profession only in the

afternoon. He gives his half-day, and Mrs. F. her whole day, to the cause of education without compensation of any kind.

Mrs. F. does all the housework herself, and as he cooks, washes, and sews, the children cluster about her, and she seems to thrive and grow happier under the ordeal. There are about fifteen children in all, and they come from all classes of society, the one objection to the situation of the school being that it is in a fashionable neighbourhood and not easy of access to the poor. It is purely a neighbourhood affair, as Mrs. F. thinks all schools should be, and consequently only two or three children of wage-earners are included in the Playhouse. This is perhaps not so much of a drawback, her experience showing that the wage-earning class is the least open to new ideas in education, and that usually they insist on the old curriculum if they can get it.

It was a great pity I had not arrived an hour earlier, as the children had just finished a performance of Wagner's "Nieblungenlied," concluding with the "Walkuere," and I saw various bits of painted cardboard scenery and of costumes lying about; and a long piece of twine was hanging across the room upon which a wonderful parti-coloured bird, also of cardboard, was suspended, which could be made to fly from one side to the other with a considerable degree of realism. As I was not brought up in this way, and had never seen these operas, and was hence woefully ignorant of the parts played by the bird, the ferocious dragon whose head lay at my feet, and the various characters, I did my best to conceal my short-

comings as they showed me all their paraphernalia of crowns and drapery and laces.

It seems that one or two of the children had seen the operas and had organized this amateur company entirely of their own notion and without help, a fact which confirms Tolstoy's theory of the interest of children in early myths. Mrs. F. had only contributed a little music on the piano, but even there the eldest girl (she is just thirteen) had been able to reproduce the various " motifs " herself, and she has learned to read sheet music quite cleverly without a single lesson, merely from observing others play, asking questions, and trying to do it herself.

This young lady has a marked preference for Wagner, and looks down upon all other composers. Another child likes Beethoven best, and particularly the " Pathétique " sonata. The younger children are less particular, and have a preference for marches of any kind. Many of them are fond of drawing, and I saw a quantity of their productions, some of which they had framed with their own hands, occasionally cutting the frame out of a single block of wood. The children take the greatest pride in each other's work, boasting of it almost as if it were their own—another childish trait which soon disappears under the ordinary course of education.

They are left in drawing, as in everything else, very much to their own devices. One boy had drawn a picture of a grove of trees and wished to make a road through it. To do this he ran two parallel lines across the paper from top to bottom and brought the picture to Mrs. F. " I don't see

what the matter is with it," he said. "It ought to look like a road, but it looks like a pole. What ought I to do?" "It took men a great many years to find out," said Mrs. F., "and perhaps it will take you a long time too." Several days later he brought her another picture with a road in proper perspective. He had worked it out for himself.

"But how do you teach them the necessary reading, writing, and arithmetic?" I asked Mrs. F. "Why, they can't help learning them," she answered. "They are in the air." And, sure enough, the children ask to be taught. There are things which they wish to know—knowledge which they crave to have—and the wisest policy is to wait until they crave it, for then it goes to the right place. It is all a matter of appetite. What a child eats with an appetite nourishes it, but that which you force down its throat makes it ill and gives it indigestion.

I know it is so in my own case. Many of my good friends insist upon lending me excellent books when I am not in the mood for reading, and as I have a troublesome conscience and dislike to say I have read a book when I have not, I am forced to wade through them against my will, and never by any chance do I gain benefit from them; but let my interest be roused in some particular line of thought, and let me find a book that has preceded me along it, and I devour it and make it a part of myself, and it might perhaps be the very same book which wearied me a year or two before, because then it arrived at an inopportune moment. Give the child or the man what he has an appetite

for. If his appetite is out of order, try to cure it, but do not stuff him against his will.

A child naturally has a healthy appetite for knowledge. All we need to do is to give it a chance. And the result is that these Playhouse children love to write, and are continually doing it for fun, while the school children who come in occasionally as guests hate it, and look upon it as a punishment. These outsiders are soon bored too, and ask piteously what to do, while the regular Playhousers are never at a loss for occupation, and storm the house before it is open for business in the morning.

The children are fond of having stories read to them. Sometimes they ask for them many days in succession, and then again they will not call for them for several days. They pick up reading in connexion with these stories, trying to find their favourite stories for themselves in the book, following the reading, and gradually learning to recognize now this word and now that.

Mrs. F. laughs at the ordinary method: "I see a cat. Do you see a cat?" People do not talk that way. Why, then, should they learn to read in that way? I inquired what she would do in case a child showed too great fondness for books, and neglected outdoor exercise in consequence. She said that she had not yet met such an abnormal boy or girl, and that only unnatural conditions could produce them.

As for arithmetic, that too the children learned in everyday life. One little girl of her own accord kept a record of the number of times she could "jump rope" without missing. Another, eight

years old, announces that she is to receive elevenpence from her mother, that she would pay fivepence that she owed out of it, and with the sixpence left buy marbles at ten for a ha'penny, to wit, 120 in all. She does this "arithmetic" in her head as rapidly as she can talk, and it is much more real to her than any number of "examples." Besides such actual experiences the children often ask to be shown how to "do sums," and I saw several of these attempts upon paper, quite orthodox in appearance.

They absorb contemporary history in the same way, and were all much interested in the Russo-Japanese war, frequently taking sides and fighting it out for themselves. There is little chance of their learning ancient history in this way, but Mrs. F. asserts boldly that teaching such things in school is never worth while, for every one forgets them; and although at first this statement seemed absurd to me, the more I think of it, the truer it appears. With the exception of some Greek and Latin and a little mathematics, I can hardly recall a thing which I learned at school. Practically all that I know of history and geography and literature was learned elsewhere, and I am inclined to think that this is a common experience. If this is so, the Playhouse children do not lose much. "They get their geography from where they go," says Mrs. F. (and she had never heard of the Russian comedy which speaks to the same effect), "and they get their history in the doings of their daily lives, their kittens and their dogs."

Mr. and Mrs. F. are not "non-resistants." They do not believe in letting the children ride

rough-shod over them, and if the invasion of their own rights were pronounced enough they would interfere in any way that they deemed necessary. But they interpret their own rights meagrely, and have apparently no objection to the invasion of their ear-drums by noise of all kinds. They frequently remind the children, however, that musical voices are pleasanter than strident ones, that boots should be wiped on the mat, and that it is best to put things back in their places.

In dealing with the children they always try to bear in mind that they are dealing with inexperienced individuals, and they are patient with them in consequence, and if possible endeavour to put them in the way of learning from experience. And they declare most positively that they have discovered that the weakest method of influencing a child is to use force. The experience which a child gets from the use of force is precisely the wrong one. He gets the idea that justice is an arbitrary and despotic matter, and that to domineer and dominate is the true way of living, in which in time he must take his part. It produces a world of slaves and masters, but it cannot produce freemen or men fit for freedom. Prisons do not change character or desire, says Mr. F. They either fail altogether to diminish the amount of crime, or they only do so by enfeebling the prisoner and making a weakling of him—a coward with a broken will.

They have had little thieves to deal with at the Playhouse, and they cured them by developing their self-respect. In the same way—not without temporary discouragements and set-backs, but

with ultimate success—they have persuaded liars to prefer telling the truth. And these results have made the teachers lose faith in the doctrine of heredity, and they believe that a proper environment can make a good member of society of any one. I asked them if they did not think that all boys pass through a barbarian stage, but they answered that if this was so it was usually before the children came into their hands, for they found them uniformly open to reason, and only unreasonable and difficult to get on with so long as the effect of former *régimes* of "discipline" clung to them.

The world is full of unavoidable discipline, why add artificially to it? There is the discipline of difficulty in doing what you wish to do, of carving stubborn wood, of drawing elusive figures, of composing reluctant sentences—the discipline of coming to a common understanding with your fellows as to what you will do and will not do—the discipline of nature, of submitting to illness and rainy weather. The only valuable discipline to add to these is self-discipline, and that is discouraged by the introduction of the master *ex machinâ*. And are we quite sure that forcing children to do irksome things makes them better able to cope with future hardships?

The F.s do not even teach politeness, but they claim that the rudest boys wear smooth at the edges in the kindly friction of the Playhouse. I saw ample proofs of affection at any rate, between teacher and taught (though these terms are misnomers), if a somewhat promiscuous kissing before recess can be admitted as evidence. Some

of the children were discussing the question the other day as to why Mrs. F. bestowed so much time upon them. "Auntie doesn't get paid," said an eight-year-old boy (and I think it was one of those who formerly showed thieving and lying proclivities), "Auntie doesn't get paid. She gets love."

To sum up, the Playhouse is a place where the child can express itself and have its neighbourhood experience, "where he is free to act, but also free to get the full reaction, reflection, and consequence of his act." The first aim is the cultivation of initiative, of self-expression, both of which are destroyed by the ordinary school system. And, strange to say, along the line of free self-expression lies the supreme virtue of concentration. Our usual idea of the best way to develop concentration of mind is to drag the child away violently from his own line of thought and insist upon his following another and probably a distasteful one, and then we wonder at his unwillingness and inability to persist in the new path.

Clearly the best way to induce him to fix his mind is to let it rest where it prefers to rest. And there, where it happens to be, let it find out the next thing for itself, exercising that faculty of originality which makes the free and independent man. To find out a thing for yourself is far better than to be taught it. Have we solved the problem of living, the riddle of the universe, so well (asks Mr. F.), that we can insist upon forcing our solution in all its details upon our children? Why not encourage them to answer questions for themselves? We need full-grown men and women,

and full growth comes from experience, and not from the cramming of information.

And self-expression calls for the right of others to self-expression, which means justice and equality. The child must learn this from experience too, and it is a delicate matter to attempt to supply the deficiencies of nature in her methods of teaching it. The slipper and ruler, the schoolroom prison, the extra task, are clumsy instruments of justice at best. A properly developed child will submit voluntarily to natural justice. One of the Playhouse boys broke a plaster cast, carelessly knocking it over with a stick. At the time everything was done to soothe his grief, but a few days later Mrs. F. explained to him that the cast cost money, that some one would have to bear the loss, and that it was most reasonable that it should fall upon him; and at latest accounts he was cheerfully saving his pennies for the purpose of making good the damage.

One curious thing the F.s have ascertained, and that is that among the most one-sided and prejudiced of children are those of radicals and "free-thinkers" and anarchists. There is a dogmatism of the undogmatic which is more offensive than the old-fashioned narrowness of sects, because it professes liberality, though it is really quite as narrow. The "free-thinker" forces his own brand of thought upon his offspring as relentlessly as the most orthodox of Methodists. The Playhouse system aims to leave the child actually free, but the "free-thinker" too often insists upon handing down to posterity intact his own particular scheme of philosophy. Men are

much alike, partly perhaps because they have all been educated in the same way. When playhouses become more common they may begin to differ.

The F.s believe that neither man nor woman is fitted to educate alone. "They must conjoin the qualities possessed by each, so that the child's whole nature may be understood and responded to. So every playhouse should have in it the man and woman united in mutual love and interest in the child." But this is the case at home. Why not leave the child there? Because, they answer, the child itself expresses the need to go out from the house; it craves a larger society, and any observer can discover the fact for himself.

What are we to think of the Playhouse? I found the principal of a large public school ready to condemn it on hearsay. Children of a certain class, he said, are not amenable to kindness. They yield to force, and nothing but force. And he may be right when a single individual is called upon to handle several hundreds of miscellaneous boys. You can break a single horse by kindness, while, if you had to break a dozen in the same time, you would be forced to obtain more rapid results in a cruder way. The Playhouse is only adapted to a small neighbourhood school—to an enlarged family—and it requires in its managers infinite patience and enthusiasm and love for children. Such teachers are rare, and neighbourhoods in which they could gather a few youngsters about them are infrequent. Still, I would like to see the experiment break out in spots here and there, and I believe it will make a real contribution to the

solution of the educational problem—of which, of course, there never can be a final solution, for it will change its aspects from year to year as men know more and think deeper and love harder.

CHAPTER XII

TOLSTOY AT HOME

While Mr. and Mrs. F. doubt the advisability of educating the child at home, Tolstoy seems to be of a different opinion, and it may be of interest to repeat here a story which shows his manner of giving moral instruction to his own children. When I visited him at Yasnaia Poliana in 1894, there was a Swiss governess living with his family who was charged with the education of the younger children. I am very sure that Tolstoy does not approve of governesses QUA governesses. A governess is a luxury, and it is only in her character as a human being that she can find justification, and I take it for granted that the existence of a governess in the Tolstoy household was a concession to the Countess. It must be remembered that Tolstoy is a "non-resistant," and when his wife wishes things to be thus and so, his principles force him to yield.

(Would it not be a good plan everywhere to require that in all marriages one of the contracting

parties should be a " non-resistant " ? and would not this party invariably be the husband ? But this is a digression.)

The essential fact is that there was a governess in the house, a strict Calvinist from Geneva, who watched the little Tolstoys day and night lest they might follow the heretical ways of their father. She could not quite understand the Count. She admitted to me that he was a saint. He produced good fruit, she could not deny it. But was it possible for a thistle to bring forth figs ? and that he was at heart a thistle seemed evident from his absolute detachment from the sound roots of dogma.

" He must be a better Christian than he thinks he is," she whispered to me knowingly, and she laboured sedulously that her youthful wards might not only be Christians, but know that they were. It is, however, simply as a source of information, and not as a worthy representative of Presbyterianism that we have to do with the governess. It is not always easy to ask a man's sons and daughters for information about him, and still less to catechise him about himself, but governesses are doubtless provided by providence for the purpose of telling true stories to inquisitive visitors, and in fulfilment of this important function the governess in question told me a story.

Only two or three days before my arrival, she said, little Sasha, the pretty, sturdy ten-year-old daughter of the Count, had been playing in front of the house with a peasant boy from the village. They quarrelled, as children do, and the lad in his anger picked up a stick and hit her with it on the

arm. It was a hard knock, and the child rushed crying into the house, exhibiting an ugly black and blue mark below the elbow. She had evidently not read her father's books, for she ran at once to him and besought him in the midst of her sobs to come out and punish her assailant. Here was an opportunity for the governess to observe how the Count would apply his doctrines in his own home, and she listened attentively.

Tolstoy took the child gently on his knee, wiped away her tears and examined the bruise. They are too far off for us to hear the conversation, but we can easily reconstruct it from the tenor of his many writings on the subject of punishment.

"Why, Sasha," said the father, "what good would it do for me to whip the boy? It wouldn't make your arm hurt any the less."

"Yes it would. Boo-hoo-hoo. He's a naughty, bad boy, and you must whip him! Boo-hoo—"

"Now just think a minute, Sasha. Why did he hit you? It was because he was angry with you, wasn't it? That is, because he hated you? Now if I whip him, won't he hate you a great deal more, and hate me too? It seems to me that the best thing for us to do is to make him love us instead, and then he will never hit you again. But if we make him hate us, he may go on hating people all his life long."

By this time Sasha had stopped crying, for her arm pained her no longer, and her thirst for vengeance had consequently become less acute.

"I tell you what I would do, dear, if I were you," the Count went on to say. "You know there is some of that raspberry-jam in the pantry

left over from supper yesterday. If I were you I would get some in a saucer and take it out to your little friend."

This advice must have startled Sasha. Why was it that she followed it ? for she did. Perhaps it was her wish to please her father, whom she loved dearly—perhaps it was curiosity to see what the young man would do, and perhaps the suggestion appealed to her sense of humour. However that may be, she went to the pantry, and the governess who saw her go lives to tell the tale. She got the jam and she took it out to her enemy.

There is one weak point about this story, and that is that all the rest that I know of it is that the boy ate the jam.

Years have passed away, and he may have poisoned his grandmother and committed all the crimes in the decalogue since that day. The daring experiment in penology may have proved an utter failure. But I have often thought lovingly of this story even in its truncated state. It is as beautiful to me as the Venus de Milo, and I am content to let my imagination complete the outline. I am sure that there was a better chance for that boy after swallowing the raspberry jam than there would have been if he had received the beating which he richly deserved.

Is it not true that the removal of hatred is the highest aim of reform, and that forgiveness and affection are the surest means of accomplishing this result ? The raspberry jam was the earnest of a fund of love which no insult nor injury could diminish, and in the face of such an overflowing store of goodness how mean and small and petty

the lad must have felt his anger and hatefulness to be!

Put yourself in his place for a moment. He is still hanging about near the house, but not too near the door. After a while he sees it open, and he makes ready to take to his heels, expecting to see an irate father with a stick. But, lo and behold! it is his erstwhile playmate, smiling through her tears, and bringing, of all things in the world, a plate of raspberry jam! How he must have tried to steel himself to the point of rejecting the enticing sweetmeat with disdain! But the temptation was too great. Little peasant boys do not have raspberry jam every day of the week, and at last he is sheepishly advancing.

He grabs the plate and gulps down its contents without a word, and with his eyes fixed on the ground. Then he slinks down the hill, and if the human race had not frittered away their tails by overmuch sedentary life, he would have carried that useful and expressive member well between his legs. If he had been whipped he would have gone down the hill to the village swearing at all the Tolstoy family, with the rest of creation thrown in. As it is, his thoughts are confused, but the prevailing one is that he has acted like a naughty boy and a fool in the bargain, and that these loving, forgiving people are a great deal better than he is. If there was a spark of good in that boy—and there is such a spark in all boys—it must have been kindled into a flame by the plate of raspberry jam.

I am aware that everybody will not agree with me. I told this story once to an audience in New

Jersey. They have some queer people over in Jersey, and one of them was there that night, and he took advantage of the discourteous and disconcerting custom of asking the lecturer questions after he had finished his discourse, a sort of baiting by which his hearers take vengeance upon him for having to sit still under him so long. He was a venerable and kindly old gentleman with a white beard, and he got up in the back of the hall and said—

"I know what that boy would do."

"What?" I asked.

"He would come up to the house the next day and hit her on the other arm!"

I do not know to this hour whether the old gentleman meant what he said or not. But here we have the two opposite theories, that of the old gentleman of New Jersey and that of the old gentleman of Russia, and between them lies all the debatable land of human conduct. Which of the two was more deeply versed in the nature of man, and is jam or the stick, forgiveness or punishment, vengeance or love, the better civilizer? There is certainly an element of beauty in the little incident, and can there be beauty without truth? And if there is truth in the Russian point of view, is it not a truth which can be applied far more frequently in our daily lives and in the institutions which express them? This is a matter for teachers to consider.

And I must add a confirmatory anecdote which a friend of mine, having read the jam story, sent me from Illinois—

"I am prompted to tell you a little experience

of my boy Howard," he writes. "He is seven years old, has never had any quarrels that I know of, and, I think, has a very kindly, peaceable disposition. But one day last summer he came in from school much disturbed. A family had just moved in across the street, and the boy (about Howard's age), on the way home from school, had stoned him, throwing stones in a wicked sort of way. Our landlord's daughter, four years older, confirmed Howard's story, was incensed, and called his assailant a little 'rough,' and suggested that Howard should go to school under her care and protection. But I thought it a good time to follow Jesus' plan, and after talking to my little man somewhat after the manner you imagined Tolstoy did to his little one, I suggested that he immediately take over to the stone-thrower a sample of some fine peaches that we had just received. My part, to talk—to suggest this—was easy, but the divine doing *he* was ready for—bless the lad! He picked out one of the finest peaches and was off. I watched him from behind a curtain march without fear or hesitancy across the street and into the garden and up to his enemy. The peach was accepted. The enemy was thus at small cost killed, so to speak, and a lasting lesson of the uses and powers of love was left in the mind of my boy. He has no enemies now, and needs no protection."

CHAPTER XIII

A CHAPTER ON PENOLOGY

In discussing the moral education of children in the last chapter I found myself naturally using the word "penology," and once or twice before we have been led by metaphor or example to see the close relationship between penology and pedagogy. The problem which is presented by naughty boys is much the same as that presented by naughty men, and it is not altogether a digression to devote a few pages to the latter.

Tolstoy disapproves altogether of punishment in any form and of the exercise of force by man upon man, and he is quite ready to dispense with prisons altogether. This seems like a very radical position, but, strange to say, the most competent prison experts go almost as far. Mr. Charlton T. Lewis, President of the National Prison Association of the United States for the past twenty years, declared in his address before the National Prison Congress at Louisville in 1903 that "our county jails everywhere are the schools and colleges of crime. In the light of social science it were better for the world if every one of them were destroyed than that this work should be continued." And again: "Experience shows that the system of imprisonment of minor offenders for short terms is but a gigantic measure for the manufacture of criminals." "Freedom, not confinement," he

adds, " is the natural state of man, and the only condition under which influences for reformation can have their full efficiency."

In an address to a former Prison Congress (Hartford, Sept. 25, 1899, published in the *Yale Law Journal* of October, 1899) the same authority says : " Prison life is unnatural at best. Man is a social creature. Confinement tends to lower his consciousness of dignity and responsibility, to weaken the motives which govern his relations to his race, to impair the foundations of character and unfit him for independent life. To consign a man to prison is commonly to enrol him in the criminal class." . . . With all the solemnity and emphasis of which I am capable, I utter the profound conviction, after twenty years of constant study of our prison population, that more than nine-tenths of them ought never to have been confined."

Mr. Lewis makes a strong plea for the " indeterminate sentence," and the release from prison, under proper supervision, of all prisoners whose release would not be a menace to society. " In all but extreme cases of depravity, what is needed with the youth beginning a lawless career is that the social motives in him be awakened and strengthened, that the habit of foresight, the sense of responsibility, the regard for the esteem of his fellows, the sympathy with mankind, be aroused to constant action. It is in the social life of the community that this work can properly be done."

The report of the Committee on Preventive Social Work made to the Fourth New York State

Conference of Charities at Buffalo in Nove.ıber, 1903, is as strong in its condemnation of prisons as Mr. Lewis—the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. J. G. Phelps Stokes, having taken part in the Prison Congress at Louisville. This Committee speaks as follows : " At the Thirty-Second Annual Congress of the National Prison Association, recently held in Louisville, Kentucky, there were present upward of one hundred prison officers representing the penal institutions of the United States and Canada, and as many penologists and criminologists and students of social movements. The sessions of the Congress lasted five days, and throughout the entire proceedings there was not a dissentient voice raised against the opinion voiced by many of the speakers, that the prisons themselves are among the principal sources of crime, and that they probably create far more crime than they cure. There were those present who maintained (and they among the ablest and most experienced), and who presented impressive evidence and arguments to show, that upon the whole the influence of most of our prisons upon the offenders and upon society should be regarded as detrimental rather than the reverse."

Upon such a statement of the case, made by those who manage the prisons and know most about them, the question naturally arises : Why, then, not abolish the prisons ? But Tolstoy does not go so far as this. He does not propose abolition. He virtually says : " I do not believe in exercising coercion on my fellow-men, and hence I cannot undertake to execute or imprison them directly or indirectly. Let him who is without

sin cast the first stone. Who am I to act as judge? And as people come gradually round to my opinion, there will be fewer and fewer left who will be willing to act as hangman and jailers and warders, until finally such professions disappear."

And here and there I see evidences that this leaven is working in society. The headsman showed his sense of shame by wearing a mask. The hangman's occupation has always been held infamous, and I see no reason why that of the "electrician" who manages an "electrocution" should be less so. Some years ago a hanging took place in a Canadian town, and they could not find a carpenter in the neighbourhood who was willing to erect the scaffold, and finally they had to send to a distant city to engage an artisan sufficiently barbarous to undertake the job. Even soldiers have the decency to serve out one rifle with a blank cartridge to an execution squad so that each man may hope that he is innocent of the victim's blood.

Maupassant relates an interesting story in his *Sur L'Eau* of an assassin who was condemned to death at Monaco. No one could be found in the principality to execute him, and the French government charged too much for its friendly offices. The sentence was consequently commuted to imprisonment for life, but after a time this also was found an expensive charge upon the little country, and they besought the prisoner to escape, which he flatly refused to do. Finally, we are told that they agreed to pay him a pension, and he was induced to settle just over the border in France. Maupassant records this as an his-

torical fact, and in relating it I do not know how far he allowed his art to triumph over his accuracy.

The case of Sheriff Mines, of Camden, New Jersey, who died in 1903, is in point. According to the newspapers his death resulted directly from the execution of a criminal. He had dreaded the ordeal beforehand, but had nerved himself sufficiently to carry it through. When it was over, however, his health failed, and he began to waste away. He could not get the scenes of the execution out of his mind, and they preyed upon him until he collapsed altogether at his office, was taken home, and, after lingering a few weeks in bed, died. The doctors called it "acute indigestion brought on by worry," but a more profound diagnosis would ascribe his death to "maladaptation to environment due to his superior civilization." If Mr. Mines had foreseen the outcome of his act, he would have resigned his office before the day of execution, and when the time comes when no one can be found to fill such a vacancy, capital punishment will have been effectively abolished.

Tolstoy's attention was first called to capital punishment when, as a young man, he witnessed an execution by the guillotine at Paris, and he instinctively felt then and there that the whole thing was evil and only evil. It was simply one man killing another. We talk of the "State's" hanging a man, but a State cannot hang. We cannot avoid responsibility for our individual acts in that way. And what good does capital punishment do? Life is just as safe in countries where it no longer prevails.

It has no deterrent effect, and this was shown by the assassination of President McKinley. He had just completed a journey through fifteen or more of the States, in several of which capital punishment had been abolished. A week before his murder he had passed several days in Michigan, where they stopped hanging people thirty years ago. Czolgosz might have shot him there (and it was nearer the murderer's home than the actual scene of the deed) with the absolute certainty of escaping with his life. But what did he do? He waited until the President had entered a State where speedy expiation by death was inevitable, and here it was that he accomplished his design. If capital punishment had any effect at all, it was to precipitate the crime, and it is not impossible that the prospect of a trial for his life and the dramatic surroundings of an execution really had some influence in fixing his choice of place for the crime. But the fact is that criminals rarely think of punishment. Their mind is engrossed with the criminal act, and they either snap their fingers at the penalty or expect to avoid it.

And capital punishment is demoralizing to those who take part in it, to those who read of it, and to all the inmates of the prison in which it is performed. For this last fact, read the *Ballad of Reading Gaol*, and that the same is true in Sing-Sing prison is proved by the fact that the officials of that institution petitioned the Legislature some years ago to remove all executions to the little prison of Dannemora, in the Adirondack wilderness, on account of the pernicious effect which such events had upon the prisoners generally.

When the State feels impelled to go off into the woods to do its work, we may be sure that it is dirty work which ought to be left undone.

The proper treatment for a criminal is to develop the good that is in him, and there is always at least a germ of good. I was reminded of this fact a year or two ago, when, during a visit to Georgia, I learned that a convict had made his escape in a daring manner from the new Federal prison at Atlanta. Descriptions of the man were at once telegraphed all over the country, and in these he was designated as a "desperate character." And what do you suppose was the occupation which had been assigned to this "desperate character" in the prison? He had been appointed barber, and he had been accustomed from morning till night to wield a sharpened razor upon the throats of his fellows! He had been trusted to this extent—and could trust go farther?—and he had fully justified the trust reposed in him. The story was a lesson to me in penology. It showed that the safety of the community rests upon the good will of our fellows far more than upon the threatening arm of the law, and that the kindliness even of ruffians is one of the bulwarks of society.

Men in prison differ very little from those outside. Ask any humane and sympathetic warden, and he will tell you that a small proportion of the prisoners in his charge have the criminal head, and seem to have been predestined to a life of crime. Is it not rather hard to punish men for the shape of their skulls? An asylum would be the proper place for them. And then the rest of

the prisoners, he would tell you, are very, very much like you and me. So that, barring the small class of defectives, if all the prisons were emptied to-day, and you and I and our friends put in instead, the world would go on very much the same. Mankind is not divided into good and bad people, but each individual has his good half and his bad half, and the best of all discipline is that which is exercised by the saint in a man over the sinner in him. This is the only real self-government, and the education which tends toward it is worth more for the public safety than all our penal institutions put together.

And how ineffectual those institutions are! Over ten thousand homicides are committed in the United States every year, and probably not ten per cent. of the perpetrators are punished. The other ninety per cent. are at large—not only of last year, but of the preceding years—and yet we are not afraid. Then we know that all the men who will commit next year's murders are free to-day, and the murderers of the immediately succeeding years as well, and that nothing can prevent it; and yet we go on living in tranquillity, not relying evidently upon the power of the law so much as upon the good will toward us of the human beings among whom we are placed.

Then when the law does intervene, how far does it protect us? It usually imprisons the criminal. A life imprisonment is rarely served out to the end, and we may practically consider imprisonment as a temporary punishment. We take a "desperate character," put him in prison, keep him there under harsh and forbidding circum-

stances for five or ten years, and then release him absolutely. It is (as Mr. Lewis says) "as if one should cage a man-eating tiger for a month or a year and then turn him loose." Is it likely that he will come out with a greater feeling of consideration for his fellows than when he went in? Is he not perfectly sure to be a more "desperate character" than he was at the beginning? And can such a policy be considered to any great extent protective of society?

Our penal laws have only one legitimate object, and that is to make better men. Crime is the result of lovelessness, when it is not a disease, and the true field of reformatory activity is to produce a spark of love in human souls. How little our prisons are adapted to this end is sufficiently evident. As for capital punishment, it is a clear evasion of our duty. What right have we, as some one has asked, to make a sort of Botany Bay of the world to come, and send our hardest cases there without consulting the wishes of the inhabitants? Nurses in hospitals fight over the most desperate cases, and prefer them to all others; and so the true penologist should long to exercise his healing influence upon the most advanced, and consequently the most interesting, cases of wickedness. There is not a man living so low but we can do something better with him than hang him.

Whether we ever arrive at such a conception of the police powers of the government or not—and there are not wanting indications that society is headed in that direction—it is, at any rate, a pleasure to find that we owe most of our security

not to gibbets and dungeons and the resulting cowardice and fear, but rather to the natural kindliness of our fellow-creatures, an atmosphere which is conducive not only to safety, but to happiness.

It will be a slow matter, the gradual apprehension of the truth regarding crime and punishment, scientifically and sympathetically. In Burmah punishment is looked upon as an expiation for crime, and when the prisoner has paid his debt to society he comes out a new man. His books are balanced, and he is as good as any one else. (See Mr. Fielding's fascinating book, *The Soul of a People*.) With us, on the contrary, the punishment is a far greater stain than the crime. Most of us could easily stand the burden of an ancestor who had committed murder, but the ignominy of one who had been hanged would be almost overwhelming.

Further than this there may be a redeeming element in crime itself. Edward Carpenter suggests in one of his luminous essays that the criminal often keeps alive some necessary social element which the prevailing society has neglected. We may thus suppose that the smuggler is not so much a criminal as a protester against the unnatural shackles of trade and an object lesson in a higher morality than that of his fellow-citizens.

It is a fact that the greatest crimes are also the greatest virtues. High treason is the first of crimes, and it is also often the first of duties. How many of the great benefactors of the race have stood in the prisoner's dock? Until recently a picture of the crucifixion, the greatest miscarriage

of justice, hung in every French court-room. The Government has recently ordered them to be removed, but it was ill-advised, I think, for I know of no better reminder to the bench of its errors and limitations. It would have been better to add other pictures of the great and good convicts of history, whose faces would be likely to instil greater modesty into the hearts of the enforcers of the law.

And the vulgar criminal may have his virtues, too. Let us call that enlightened witness, Mr. Lewis, again. He speaks of convicts, "whom I regard as heroes upon the face of the earth, and before whom I am happy to bow in reverence as to those to whom I must give precedence by a true standard of manhood. For I know my life has wrought no such heroic work as that of the man who, under the terrible burden of inherited degradation and accumulated shame, has achieved the conquest of self, the victory over passion, the triumph over his own past and over the prejudices of a community which had learned to distrust and despise him."

The "indeterminate sentence" and the "probation" system, in the hands of men like Mr. Lewis, would certainly be a great advance in the right direction, and he declares that wherever they have been fairly tried they have succeeded marvellously. The criminal, like the child, must learn in society, and not in a school which shuts him out from real life. The convict at large could be committed to the supervision of such societies as the Prison Association, the "Volunteers" or the Salvation Army.

But society itself is largely responsible for the crime committed within it. We forget the solidarity of social conduct, and that we are members one of another, and silent partners in each other's misdeeds. Beside each criminal prosecution, "The People against John Doe," I would like to see another action instituted entitled "John Doe against the People," in which the community should be brought to book for having made a criminal of the plaintiff or permitted him to become one, and the evidence offered would be that of unjust social conditions, improper environment, the limitation of opportunities and the shortcomings of education.

"Every student of our penal administration knows well that the criminal class is, generation after generation, the continual product of our social system," says Mr. Lewis, and he points out, as an example, the evil effect of imprisonment for petty offences, but his remark is true in the widest sense. We must be just in our social and industrial arrangements before we can decently talk of "administering justice," and we must in educating the child begin to develop that germ of good which, if it is once allowed to atrophy, may sooner or later leave him an apt candidate for membership in the criminal classes.

CHAPTER XIV

TRUE AND FALSE EDUCATION

Some years ago I visited the University of El Azhar at Cairo, the most famous seat of learning in the Mohammedan world. On the stone floor of the vast mosque, some under the roof and some in the open air, I saw the professors in their turbans and gowns sitting each at the foot of his column and surrounded by his group of students, and all of them, teachers and taught, were swaying back and forth, reading aloud in sing-song from books which they held close to their eyes and which swayed up and down with them. I believe that the book was invariably the Koran, but, to judge from the sound, each individual was reading a different passage. I had tried to read the Koran in an English translation, and had formed a very poor opinion of it, and hence I looked with amazement upon this venerable travesty of an education.

For the past thousand years, from the ends of Islam, from India, Arabia, Turkestan, the Philippines and Central Africa, young men have journeyed painfully and strenuously to this far-famed centre of light in search of instruction. I smiled with gentle contempt upon the absurd assemblage. How superior I was to them—I, who had been brought up in a country where they knew what an education ought to be.

It is a good thing sometimes at moments of supreme complacency to examine into the facts upon which it is based. What was the history of my own school and college days? Had I not spent the better part of nine years in studying two dead languages, which at the end of that period I could neither read nor write nor speak? I began to have some misgivings, and to feel a certain degree of fellow-feeling for the groups of Koran-chanters. We were not so different after all, for the dead hand of monk and dervish lies still upon Occident and Orient alike. We were really all in the same boat, and the Universities of Berlin and Oxford and Chicago are none of them yet quite free from the superstitions of Damascus and Bagdad.

We owe the monstrous delusion that language forms the main part of education to the monastic students of the Middle Ages. All that was worth knowing was then contained in the Greek and Latin classics and Scriptures, and it was natural to confuse the medium of information with the learning itself. The Greek and Latin languages were then windows in the house of knowledge. Since that time all the treasures of that house have been brought out into the open air, but still many of us continue to climb through the windows, and in the operation we forget what we came for, lost in a sort of pseudo-science of window-climbing.

The study of words is not education. It is the letter that killeth but the spirit giveth life, and it is the worship of the letter that deforms education east and west; it is the dry-rot of the book

exalted above the thought and the thing. The monks of old, shut up in their libraries and far away from the real life of the times—well might they spend years in decorating parchment scrolls with their beautiful flourishes, but they are no guides for us to-day.

A man may know many languages and yet not be educated. I used to live in Alexandria, the most polyglot city of the world, where every child born in the large foreign colony is heir to six or eight languages, for Arabic, French, Italian, Greek, English, German, Turkish, Armenian, Berberine, Spanish—all of these and others too—are in common use. And yet it is a city of little education, and few of these linguistic prodigies are well educated. I recall one acquaintance of mine, a foreign merchant, who was equally at home in half-a-dozen tongues, but whose horizon was strictly limited by his business and his daily newspaper.

To know a foreign language is a desirable accomplishment if we have occasion to use it, but it is not education. It comes rather under the head of valuable information. Just so it is useful to learn the names of the streets of the city in which we intend to live, but it is a waste of time to study a plan of St. Petersburg if we never intend to go there. Education begins at home.

And we have an exaggerated idea too of the educational importance of our own language. When a boy in the spelling class says "d—e—d, dead," we correct him and make him insert an unnecessary (and really harmful) "a." It is plain that he was doing the sensible thing and that

we are teaching him a piece of unreason. Surely this cannot properly be called education. Our correction is absolutely arbitrary and answers to nothing in nature. And how we magnify the importance of grammar! The real use of language is to convey our meaning, and the man who says "them things" conveys his quite as well as we who say "those things." Why, then, should we assume an air of superiority? For all we know, a hundred years hence "them things" may be right and "those things" wrong; for what is our language made of, if not of the mistakes of our ancestors? What is the main value of thorough drilling in spelling and grammar? Why, when I meet a man who exhibits a knowledge of the rules of prosody and orthography in his speech and writing, I say to myself, "My dear sir, you have been taught in the same way that I was taught; we belong to the same fraternity." It is a kind of Masonic grip, that is all.

I know a man who slips up frequently in conversation, and who cannot write a page of a letter without making several mistakes, and yet he knows almost everything else under the sun. He can build a house, make a road, work a forge, and mend a mowing-machine; he understands the care of horses and cattle, the qualities of different soils, the proper seasons for sowing and planting and reaping. He can cook his dinner and break a colt and manage men; and I have often been tempted to say to him, "You are the educated man, and not I." It is true that I have resisted the temptation thus far and may eventually

triumph over it, and yet if I did yield to it some day, would I not be coming pretty near the truth ? For I was educated upon the theory that I was a disembodied mind, and as a result I find it very difficult to this day even to sharpen a pencil. Count Tolstoy testifies even more radically to similar facts in Russia, for he says that there the best educated men often can neither read nor write.

We have bodies as well as minds, and that is a great discovery for the educator to have made. Education must include the body, or it will be one-sided. In Germany the specialization of mind and body has gone farther perhaps than elsewhere, and there we have the ideal learned professor, with a huge bald forehead, great gold spectacles over his nearly blind eyes, and a slim, round-shouldered body which has almost atrophied from lack of fresh air and exercise. Go out from him into the fields and see the typical peasant, a giant in strength, but with a mind utterly undeveloped in the direction of book-learning.

I remember as a boy visiting Oxford during the Franco-Prussian war and having the gardener of one of the colleges ask me if the war was in our neighbourhood ! And thus the beautiful walls of Christ Church and Magdalen dam up, as it were, the reservoirs of knowledge and prevent them from overflowing into the minds of the working people. A man has arms and legs as well as a brain, and he should learn to make use of all of them. What could be more absurd than the Indian clubs and dumb-bells and weights and pulleys which men have devised for the purpose of giving them that

physical exercise which they should have been taught to find in some useful occupation ?

We need to produce all-round men and women, and the highest civilization is that which produces the greatest number of them. In our haste to manufacture "things," we have forgotten the manufacture of men. We have "heads" over factories and "hands" to work in them, but the idea of combining head and hand in one individual is only just asserting itself. The principal product of a country is not its steel rails or its bicycles or its machinery, but its men and women, and our most important manufactories are the schools in which we undertake to shape them. Of all our "captains of industry," the schoolmaster is the most essential to the true progress of the country.

But there is one thing in the child more important than mind or body, and that is what we call character—the spiritual nature—the soul. A child's character is his attitude to his environment, an attitude which may be masterful or servile, true or false, kindly or hateful. The first axiom for the teacher to assimilate is that there are natural elements at work in the child making for a good character. Give him a chance and he will show initiative, prefer the truth and exhibit affection for those about him. He must be encouraged along these lines, and great care must be taken to throw no obstruction in his way.

The deepest thing in character is love, for it is a pliant, suggestive, and yet overwhelming force, and in its self-forgetfulness leaves the way clear for all justice and righteousness. Children are affectionate by nature, and perhaps that is the

quality contemplated by the saying, "Unless ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." It is not therefore necessary to teach love for neighbour positively, but to invite and cultivate it. In the old-fashioned school, with its hard and fast system and its discipline, this would not be easy. Yet even here the teacher might begin to exercise the child in the class-room in loving the other children. On the first day, say, let each pupil begin with the child on his right, and on the next take in the one on his left, and then the one before and the one behind, until the circle of affection spread out and embraced the whole school, like the ripple from a falling stone on a pond. By the time it reached the walls of the school-house nothing could stop it, and it would take in the whole world before long, and it would prove as catching as the mumps or the measles. A good, manly, robust love is really the natural activity of human souls.

Possibly the above method might be a difficult one to inaugurate, but surely the many writers upon pedagogy could invent a better way if they once applied their minds to it. The trouble is that they have never thought seriously of developing the affections. The thing to avoid is the production of little prigs and hypocrites. And perhaps the best way to do this is not to have an old-fashioned school at all, but a new fashioned one in which not a word on the subject of love for neighbour should be uttered, but everything possible done "on the quiet" to kindle into a flame every spark of it which shows itself. And the beauty of this neighbour love is that it goes down

to the very root of all activities, and gives a motive for all the mental and physical and moral training that can be devised, for as soon as the individual begins to love he is seized by a strong desire to be useful to those whom he loves, and to look upon himself as an instrument for their welfare, and he will wish at once to make himself as perfect an instrument as he can.

Here, then, is a good strong peg on which to hang all education, and the same studies which before were mere "accomplishments" and selfish indulgences become miraculously transformed into subordinate parts of a coherent scheme of education, and the whole circle of "lessons" become related at the centre with the desire to serve humanity. Such a view of education puts every kind of knowledge in its place and gives a field of exercise to the natural exuberance of the child —to his sense of honesty, courage, truth, justice and all the other virtues. Without some such conception of education as this we might as well join the classes on the floor of the mosque of El Azhar and mumble gibberish for the rest of our lives and consider ourselves educated.

It is encouraging to know that despite all temporary and local symptoms of reaction the general drift of the educational world is towards greater freedom. Schools are more efficient now without corporal punishment than they used to be with it. We are learning that we must substitute nature's discipline for our own. The child should fear, not us, but the consequences of his acts. As Bolton Hall has well said in an unpublished lecture, "Nature punishes. To punish

a child is to teach it that when you are absent it can transgress nature's laws and go unpunished"; and again, "Nature is a school, and when we punish we take the child away from nature's school." Punishment is an appeal to cowardice, to the beast in man. Let us rather appeal, says he, to the divinity in him. "It were as well to break a child's back as to break his will." And another objection to punishment is a practical one which I draw from my own experience, for I have never indulged in it without feeling that I was doing something worse, in punishing, than the original offence of the child. In the last analysis the reason that I punish the child is because I happen to be stronger than he is, and this is an irrational basis for justice. At any rate, let us try to avoid such arbitrary and faulty methods. Our best and most successful educators have long since discarded them, and the appeal to force shows only the weakness of the teacher.

And new methods of instruction are making their way too. Read *School and Society*, by Professor John Dewey, of the University of Chicago, if you wish to learn what the next step in education will be. In his schools they do things together. They are social affairs. He shows clearly that the mere absorption of facts is an individual and selfish pursuit, and that marks and examinations give an artificial and anti-social competitive quality to education, so that it actually becomes a school crime for one child to help another, when such help should be recognized as a great virtue.

Mr. Reeder, superintendent of the New York Orphan Asylum, too, condemns "institution-

alism." "Only life," he says, "rich, full, free, natural and individual, prepares for life. . . . The discipline that makes a good soldier or a good factory operative shrivels the life of a child," and he might have added "of a soldier and of a factory operative too." Everywhere we hear of the introduction of manual training and of the Kindergarten system, and the influence of Pestalozzi and Froebel is slowly extending and improving upon itself.

The educational world is to-day in a state of ferment, and hence the strong convictions of a man like Tolstoy are likely to impress themselves upon it; and when he calls upon us to make the child his own chief teacher, we are bound to give ear and consider his advice. Teach the child when it wishes to learn, and do not (as Bolton Hall says we do) rebuke it for asking questions at one time—("You will understand that later, my dear," or "Don't interrupt me!")—and then cram it with undesired information at another.

It has often been noted that country-bred boys as a rule succeed better in life than city boys. Is it not because they are brought up in an atmosphere of greater freedom? It is from the determination of such questions as "Shall I climb the apple-tree or sail boats in the brook?" that initiative and self-reliance spring, and the omnipresent nurse, governess and tutor are usually discouragers of originality, while the streets of a city offer little play for choice. The best environment for a child, and hence the best school, is the one which presents the widest range of selection for his activities, and which leaves the

choice as far as possible to him. Whenever the school of the future begins to realize this ideal, the happy children of that day and the well-rounded men and women, full of energy and readiness, who will grow up from them, will owe a debt of gratitude to Count Tolstoy, for he will surely have his high place among the pioneers of a freer and truer education.

THE END.

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